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ABSTRACT

A series of questions for high school students to use in interviewing or researching county and state governments are presented. Questions concerning county government are grouped into five categories: governing, administrative agencies, fiscal affairs, planning and zoning, and issues. Students investigate salaries, powers, and duties of officials; how the budget is determined; the extent of the planning board's authority; functions of county health agencies; and crime rates and pollution. Questions about state government are grouped into four categories: executive, executive departments, judicial, and legislative. Students examine functions of the governor and lieutenant governor, the organization and management of state departments, the court system, the role of the public defender, and the power of the state legislature. (KC)

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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT COUNTY & STATE GOVERNMENT

Institute for Political/Legal Education

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On behalf of the Department of Education, State of New Jersey, I wish to bring the Institute for Political and Legal Education to the attention of educators throughout the nation. The program has made a significant contribution to the education of high school students about the American political, governmental, and legal processes and thus should be of interest to educators, parents, and students.

Fred G. Burke

Dr. Fred G. Burke
Commissioner of Education
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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT COUNTY AND STATE GOVERNMENT

INTRODUCTION

Many questions about County and State government go unanswered. What is County government? How does it relate to local government? How does it relate to State government?

What influence does State government have on our lives? Where can one go for assistance on certain problems?

Many questions . . . but they all have answers. Everyday events occur around us that are influenced by one or both of these branches of government.

This section is designed to help students from junior to senior high obtain useful information about their state's governments. Many of the questions can serve as the basis for actual interviews with County and State officials. They may also be used as a guide for in-depth research if teacher and student so desire.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

GOVERNING

1. What is the county legislative body called?

2. What is the classification of your county according to population and geographic location?

3. How many members of the legislative body are there and how long is their term?

4. How is their salary determined?

5. How is the director of the legislative body selected? What is the director's duties and responsibilities?
   Does he/she have more jurisdiction and power than the other legislators on the body?
   What constitutes the basic powers of the legislative body?
   Are they limited in any way?

6. How often does the legislative body meet and are the meetings open to the public?
   What ways are used to communicate information to the public?

ADMINISTRATIVE

1. Does your county have a county administrator?
   What is the term of office of the administrator?
   How are his/her powers designated?

2. Does your county have a supervisor?
   What is his/her term of office?
   In what manner are his/her powers limited?
   What is the salary of a supervisor?
   Should it be adjusted?

3. Who is responsible for appointments to the different agencies, boards, or commissions?

4. What is the procedure for passage of laws on the county level?

AGENCIES

1. What offices in each county are required by the State Constitution to be elective?

2. What are the duties of the county clerk and sheriff? How long are their terms? Does your county have a surrogate? If so, what is his responsibility?

3. What are the differences between the sheriff and the county detective?

4. What are the differences between the local law enforcement agencies and the county law enforcement agencies? In what way are they alike?

5. What agencies are the counties required to have, by state law?

6. How many other agencies have been created by your county?

7. Who directs these agencies?

8. Are they appointed or elected? Which ones are directed by the county legislative body?

9. How are the counties restricted by legislation regarding the type of agencies which can be created?

FISCAL AFFAIRS

1. Specify what amount is appropriate by the state for legislatively-required county agencies?

2. Which agencies in the county have state appointed officials and how are they paid?

3. Who pays for other appointed officials?

4. How much of your county welfare program is subsidized by the state?

5. What percent of state tax goes to the county?

6. How does your community contribute to the county budget?

7. How is the budget determined for the different agencies?

8. How is the overall budget determined?

PLANNING AND ZONING

1. Is there a planning board in your county?
   How many members serve?
   Are their positions appointed?

2. What is the planning board's authority?
   How is the board financed?

3. What restrictions are made on the municipal land use powers as far as zoning is concerned.

4. Do you have any local governing bodies joining into intergovernmental planning within your county?

5. What type of non-governmental agencies do you have in your county that help with the planning?

6. What is regionalization and what kind do you have in your county?

ISSUES

1. What type of aid for education is given to the disadvantaged children in your county?

2. What are the special functions of the health agencies in your county?
   What is a landfill operation and does your county have one?

3. What type of pollution controls are placed on the industries in your county and what is the fine for a violation?

4. What is the crime rate in your county?

5. Does the county have jurisdiction over local affairs?

6. Does your county have any cooperative agreements in purchasing or services? Describe them.

STATE GOVERNMENT

EXECUTIVE

1. What are the basic functions of the Governor?

2. Who are the principal personal staff members of the Governor who act as buffers between the Governor and claims upon his/her attentions and also act as advisors on legislative proposals?

3. Does your state have a lieutenant governor?
   Who will fill the Governor's seat in case of vacancy and for how long?

4. What makes the Governor's appointment power so significant?

5. What posts are appointed by the Governor and include all levels of state government?

6. Is the state legislature a full or part-time position?
   Is the executive more influential than the legislature on the initiation and development of policies?
   Why?

7. What is a veto and explain the power of the Governor's veto?

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS

1. Who decides which departments will be headed by a single executive and which will be headed by a board?

2. What departments serve concurrent with the Governor's term?

3. What departments are headed by a policy-making board?

4. Who appoints or elects the Commissioner of Education (or State School Superintendent) and how long is his/her term?

5. What departments basically make up the Governor's cabinet? Explain basically what the cabinet departments' functions are, who appoints the heads of the departments, and what their official titles are.

6. What commission is in charge of organization of state government?

7. Explain briefly what the Department of Civil Service encompasses and how it has attempted to eliminate the "spoils system."

8. What are the duties of the Secretary of State?

9. How are the legal and formal records organized at the State Department?

10. Who undertakes the management of each state government department?

11. Who determines whether the department head has the authority to organize his/her own department?

12. How is the annual budget basically divided?

JUDICIAL

1. What is the highest court of the state and what is the basic composition of this court?
   What type of cases are in the jurisdiction of this court?

2. Explain the division of the Superior Court or Circuit Court.
   Explain the two trial divisions under this court.

3. How are the judges appointed in your state?

4. What court makes the rules governing the administration and the practice of all the courts in the state?

5. What judicial officers are appointed by the Governor?

6. What right of the people is granted by the Fifth Amendment and is it screened by the Grand Jury?

7. What is a "petit" or trial jury?

8. What are the basic qualifications of jurors?
   Is it the same for all the courts?

9. What is the selection procedure of jurors?

10. What is a public defender and is he/she appointed?

11. What are the powers of an Attorney General?
    Is he/she appointed and by whom?

12. What is the role of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court (or Family Court)?
    In what ways does it function differently from other courts in the state/county system?

LEGISLATURE

1. What amount of vote is needed to override the Governor's veto?

2. What are some of the most prominent interest groups in the legislature and why are they influential?

3. What are the state stipulations which must be met in order for someone to be registered as a lobbyist?

4. What type of power does the state Senate have to act on nominations?

5. What constitutes a bill, a resolution, and a statute?

6. What are the constitutional requirements for passage of legislation?

7. How is actual voting on legislation accomplished?

8. How does the committee system operate in the legislature in reference to legislation?

9. How are the Speaker of the Assembly and the President of the Senate chosen?

10. How are the committee chairmen selected?

11. How many members are there in the State Senate and Assembly?
    What are the terms for Senators and Assemblymen?
    What defines a district and how many Senators represent your district?
    What type of constitutional immunities are the legislators entitled to?
    What is their salary and are there any stipulations?

12. What constitutes a professional staff of the legislature?
    What type of duties do they perform?
    Who takes care of the planning for the state government?

13. Is there any formal arrangement in the legislature which allows for professional people to act as liaisons between the Governor and the Assemblymen and the Senators?
    If so, what are their functions?